

bitacle; to the whiche nacions, what for difficultee of weyes and what for dyversitee of langages, and what for defaute of un-usage and entrecomynge of marchaundise, nat only the names of singuler men ne may nat strechchen, but eek the fame of citees ne may nat strechchen. At the laste, certes, in the tyme of Marcus Tullius, as himself writ in his book, that the renoun of the comune of Rome ne hadde nat yit passed ne cloumben over the mountaigne that highte Caucasus; and yit was, thilke tyme, Rome wel waxen & greetly redouted of the Parthes and eek of other folk enhabitinge aboute. Seestow nat thanne how streit and how compressed is thilke glorie that ye travailen aboute to shewe and to multiplie? May thanne the glorie of a singuler Romaine strechchen thideras the fame of the name of Rome may nat climben ne passen? And eek, seestow nat that the maneres of dyverse folk and eek hir lawes ben discordaunt among himself; so that thilke thing that som men jugen worthy of preysinge, other folk jule that it is worthy of torment? And therof comth it that, though a man delyte him in preysinge of his renoun, he may nat in no wyse bringen forth ne spreden his name to many maner poeples. Therefor every man oughte to ben apayed of his glorie that is published among his owne neighbours; and thilke noble renoun shal ben restreyned within the boundes of o manere folke. But how many a man, that was ful noble in his tyme, hath the wrecched and nedy foryetinge of wryteres put out of minde and don away! Al be it so that, certes, thilke wrytinges profiten litel; the whiche wrytinges long and derk elde doth away, bothe hem & eek hir autours. But ye men semen to geten yow a perdurabletee, whan ye thenken that, in tyme to comynge, your fame shal lasten. But natheles, yif thou wolt maken comparisoun to the endeles spaces of eternitee, what thing hast thou by whiche thou mayst rejoyssen thee of long lastinge of thy name? for yif ther were maked comparisoun of the abydinge of a moment to ten thousand winter, for as mochel as bothe the spaces ben ended, yit hath the moment som porcioun of it, although it litel be. But natheles, thilke selve noumbre of yeres, & eek as many yeres as therto may be multiplyed, ne may nat, certes, ben comparisoun to the perdurabletee that is endeles; for of thinges that han ende may be maked comparisoun, but of thinges that ben withouten ende, to thinges that han ende, may be maked no comparisoun. And forthy is it that, although renoun, of as long tyme as ever thee list to thinken, were thought to the regard of eternitee,

that is unstaunchable & infinit, it nesholde nat only semen litel, but pleyntliche right nothing aright, but yif it be for the audience of poeple and for ydel rumours; and ye forsaken the grete worthinesse of science and of vertu, & ye seken your guerdouns of the smale wordes of straunge folk.

HAVE now heer and understonde, in the lightnesse of swich pryde and festive & merily swich vanitee. Whylom ther was a man that hadde assayed with stryvinge wordes another man, the whiche, nat for usage of verray vertu but for proud veine glorie, had taken upon him falsly the name of a philosophre. This rather man that I spak of thoughte he wolde assaye, wher he, thilke, were a philosophre or no; that is to seyn, yif that he wolde han suffered lightly in pacience the wronges that weren don unto him. This feynede philosophre took pacience a litel whyle, & whan he hadde received wordes of outrage, he, as in stryvinge ayein and rejoyssinge of himself, seyde at the laste right thus: Understondest thou nat that I am a philosophre? That other man answerde ayein ful bytingly, & seyde: I hadde wel understonden it, yif thou haddest holden thy tonge stille. **B**ut what is it to this noble worthymen (for, certes, of swiche folke speke I) that seken glorie with vertu? What is it? quod she; what atteyneth fame to swiche folke, whan the body is resolved by the deeth at the laste? for yif it so be that men dyen in al, that is to seyn, body and soule, the whiche thing our resoun defendeth us to bileven, thanne is ther no glorie in no wyse, for what sholde thilke glorie ben, whan he, of whom thilke glorie is seyde to be, is right naught in no wyse? And yif the soule, which that hath in itself science of gooderkes, unbounden fro the prison of the erthe, wendeth frely to the hevene, despyseth it nat thanne alle erthely occupacioun; and, being in hevene, rejoyseth that it is exempt fro alle erthely thinges? As who seith, thannerekketh the soule of no glorie of renoun of this world.

Metre VII.

Quicunque solam mente praecipiti petit.

WHOSO that, with overthrowinge thought, only seeketh glorie of fame, and weneeth that it be sovereyn good: lat him loken upon the brode shewing of contraries of hevenc, and upon the streite site of this erthe; and he shal ben ashamed of the encrees of his name, that may nat fulfille the litel compass

of the erthe. O! what coveiten proude folk to liften up hir nekkes in ydel in the dedly yok of this worlde? for although that renoun ysprad, passinge to ferne poeples, goth by dyverse tonges; & although that grete houses or kinredes shynen with clere titles of honours; yit, natheles, deeth despyseth alle heye glorie of fame; and deeth wrappeth togidere the heye hevedes & the lowe, and maketh egal & evene the heyeste to the loweste. Wher women now the bones of trewe fabricius? What is now Brutus, or stierne Catoun? The thinne fame, yit lastinge, of hir ydel names, is marked with a fewe lettres; but although that we han known the faire wordes of the fames of hem, it is nat yeven to knowe hem that ben dede & consumpte. Liggeth thanne stille, aloutrely unknowable; ne fame ne maketh yow nat knowe. And yif ye wene to liven the longer for winde of your mortal name, whan o cruel day shal ravisshe yow, thanne is the seconde deeth dwellinge unto yow. **C**lose. The first deeth he clepeth heer the departinge of the body and the soule; and the seconde deeth he clepeth, as heer, the stinginge of the renoun of fame.

Prose VIII.

Set me in exorabile contra fortunam.

BUT for as mochel as thou shalt nat wenen, quod she, that I bere untretable bataille ayeins fortune, yit somtyme it bifalleth that she, deceyvable, deserveth to han right good thank of men; and that is, whan she herself opneth, and whan she sheweth hir frount, and sheweth hir maneres. Peraventure yit understondest thou nat that I shal seye. It is a wonder that I desire to telle, and forthy unnethe may I unpleyten my sentence with wordes; for I deme that contrarious fortune profiteth more to men than fortune debonaire. for alwey, whan fortune semeth debonaire, than she lyeth falsly in bihetinge the hope of welefulnesse; but forsothe contrarious fortune is alwey soothfast, whan she sheweth herself unstable thorough hir chaunginge. The amiable fortune deceyveth folk; the contrarie fortune techeth. The amiable fortune bindeth with the bautee of false goodes the hertes of folk that usen hem; the contrarie fortune unbindeth hem by the knowinge of freele welefulnesse. The amiable fortune mayst thou seen alwey windy and flowinge, and ever misknowinge of herself; the contrarie fortune is atempere and restreyned, & wys

thorough exercise of hir adversitee. At the laste, amiable fortune with hir flateringes draweth miswandring men fro the sovereyn good; the contrarious fortune ledeth ofte folk ayein to soothfast goodes, and haleth hem ayein as with an hooke. Weneest thou thanne that thou oughtest to leten this a litel thing, that this aspre and horrible fortune hath discovered to thee the thoughtes of thy trewe freendes? forwhy this ilke fortune hath departed and uncovered to thee bothe the certein visages & eek the doutous visages of thy felawes. Whan she departed away fro thee, she took away hir freendes, and lafte thee thyne freendes. Now whan thou were riche and weleful, as thee semede, with how mochel woldest thou han bought the fulle knowinge of this, that is to seyn, the knowinge of thy verray freendes? Now pleyne thee nat thanne of richesse ylorn, sin thou hast founden the moste precious kinde of riches, that is to seyn, thy verray freendes.

Metre VIII.

Quod mundus stabili fide.

HAT the world with stable feith varieth acordable chaunginges; that the contrarious qualitee of elements holden among himself aliaunce perdurable; that Phebus the sonne with his goldene chariet bringeth forth the rosene day; that the mone hath commaundement over the nightes, which nightes Hesperus the evesterre hath brought; that the see, greedy to flowen, constreyneth with a certein ende hise floodes, so that it is nat lewful to streche hise brode termes or boundes upon the erthes, that is to seyn, to covere al the erthe: al this acordaunce of thinges is bounden with Love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also commaundements to the hevencs. And yif this Love slakede the brydeles, alle thinges that now loven hem togederes wolden maken a bataille continually, and stryven to fordoon the fasoun of this worlde, the whiche they now leden in acordable feith by faire moevinges. This Love halt togidere poeples joigned with an holy bond, and knitteth sacrament of mariages of chaste loves; & Love endyteth lawes to trewe felawes. O! weleful were mankind, yif thilke Love that governeth hevenc governed youre corages!

Explicit Liber secundus.